

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in Low-Performing Schools

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.132, 158.6455, 703 KAR Chapter 5

History/Background:

Existing Policy. In January 2008, Commissioner Draud convened the Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in Low-Performing Schools, inviting representatives of stakeholder groups across the Commonwealth to join him in addressing one of the most critical issues facing educators to date – how to maximize student achievement, particularly in low-performing schools.

From the beginning of his tenure, Dr. Draud and the Kentucky Board of Education had been engaged in intense conversations about how to help all schools reach the goal of proficiency by 2014. They noted that while many schools had already met this goal and many more were on their way to reaching it, other schools were struggling and, absent immediate intervention, would not meet their student achievement goals. The board expressed a sense of urgency that additional action be taken to assist those schools most at risk for failure to meet their targets.

Commissioner Draud hoped the Blue Ribbon Panel would accomplish a number of objectives:

- To help ignite a sense of urgency for school improvement among all Kentucky educators;
- To create a focus on strategies and resources that have been successful in helping struggling schools raise the achievement levels of all students, including an analysis of academic assistance programs from other states;
- To re-examine current legislation governing state intervention with low-performing schools and discuss changes to the law that would allow KDE to intervene sooner in low-performing schools; and
- To build relationships among all education stakeholders and encourage a more collaborative, coordinated focus on school improvement and opportunities for increasing community involvement in school success.

At the initial meeting of the panel, Commissioner Draud challenged the members to undertake this important work and outlined their charge:

- To determine the best possible strategies for intervention and make recommendations on their findings;

- To make recommendations for how KDE may intervene and provide assistance differently to dramatically improve student achievement in our lowest performing schools and districts; and
- To make recommendations for a legislative package to deal with the lowest performing schools and districts.

The Panel met for four work sessions (February 25, March 24, May 5, and June 24, 2008). During those sessions, members:

- were provided data about the percentages of schools on target to reach proficiency by 2014, and information about current KDE initiatives to address the needs of low-performing schools;
- discussed and prioritized their top recommendations to improve low-performing schools based upon research and personal experiences;
- heard presentations from leaders of high performing schools and districts and partner organizations about the practices in their schools that were having the most impact on increasing student achievement;
- discussed the most effective intervention strategies, the ways KDE might provide assistance to low-performing schools differently, and made recommendations on the content of a legislative agenda to address needs of low-performing schools; and
- reviewed a draft report of their work to provide additional clarification and input.

A draft copy of their report, “*The Improvement Imperative: Successful Intervention Strategies, A Different Approach to Kentucky Department of Education Assistance, and A Renewed Authority for Action*” is attached for review (Attachment A). Members of the Blue Ribbon Panel have been invited to the meeting to be recognized for their dedicated and enthusiastic work to assist KDE in improving levels of student achievement. Upon finalization of the report, it will be disseminated across the state.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency

Increasing the achievement in low-performing schools is essential for improving the teaching and learning for the students and getting these schools to proficiency.

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Commissioner of Education

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